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A PLEA

FOR THE

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

OF

OUR RESOURCES.

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A PLEA FOR THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF OUR RESOURCES.

There is no necessity so clearly seen, nor any the import of which is more fully recognised by the people of this Province, than the necessity of developing, without delay, our available natural resources. It is conceded upon every hand that production in the main branches of natural industry is essential, not only to any permanent prosperity which may characterize the future of this country, but to our very and immediate existence as a Province. The disparity which exists at present between our exports and our imports is striking in the extreme. The latter may well be considered excessive for a much larger population than we can number, while the former, consisting chiefly of raw furs, appears almost insignificant. It need hardly be remarked that the difference between the sum we pay for goods brought into the country, and that which we receive for goods sent out of the country, is almost so much money lost to the Province, and, up to this time, the drain of money flowing into the hands of our neighbors across the line, for provisions, freights, etc., and to the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, for dry goods, groceries and hardware, has both been incessant and on the increase. This state of matters is, no doubt, characteristic of all new countries at the outset of their career; but if Manitoba is to become the great and prosperous Province which nature seems to have intended, and which it is the hope and belief of those who are best affected to the Dominion, she shall become, this drain of our life-blood, so to speak, must speedily cease, —the adverse balance of trade must first be reduced, and finally turned in our favor, and in order to achieve this desirable result it is plain we must have recourse to the development of our principal natural resources.

The pecuniary requirements of the Province have hitherto been supplied chiefly by the money taken into

the country by immigrants, and by the large disbursements by Government in connection with the military and civil services. While we may reasonably hope that the amount of money which will flow into the country, by the channels just indicated, especially by the former, will not be less for some time to come than it has been in the past, and while we have every reason to expect that an immense and permanent addition will be made to the capital of the Province, and a corresponding impetus given to its commerce, by the Canadian Pacific Railway, both while that gigantic undertaking is under construction, and after it has been completed; it must be remembered that all these sources of income are more or less adventitious and uncertain in their nature, and it would be consummate folly in us to depend too much upon external aids, no matter how promising and valuable some of them may be for a time, and to allow our natural resources—upon the due development of which our ultimate prosperity must be based—to remain in abeyance. A more fitting time than the present to begin the great work of our material prosperity, has not hitherto occurred, and may never occur again in our annals. It is extremely improbable that such a conjunction of auspicious circumstances, as at present smile upon the career of our young Province, can ever take place again; and the object of these remarks is to impress upon all who have a stake in the country, and who have its true and lasting prosperity at heart, that advantage ought to be taken of these circumstances, to begin the development of such of the natural resources of the country as may be most susceptible of the same, and which may afterwards be most conducive to its welfare.

Let us first endeavor to ascertain what our natural resources really are, and to what degree of attention their intrinsic merits as such entitles them. Confining our search within the limits of the Province, we shall find the task an easy one. It will be found that, with the exception of certain minerals—the most important of which, to us, are coal and iron—we possess in a greater or less degree almost all the resources which are to be found in the other Provinces of the Dominion. It is true

that in respect to some of these, such, for example, as timber for building purposes, the Province is lamentably deficient; but, as regards others, our fisheries and soil for instance, we are more than compensated for those denied or only sparingly granted to us. It is quite obvious, however, that the principal source of the future prosperity of Manitoba—a source of wealth which is practically illimitable and exhaustless lies in her soil. The Prairie Province is essentially an agricultural Province, and we believe that the development of this resource is likely to be of more value than that of all the other resources of the country put together, and in this belief we would urge the attention of all parties interested to the subject.

Let us look for a little at the natural advantages and facilities which this country offers for the successful prosecution of agricultural operations. If we institute a comparison between our condition in the above respects and that of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, or even the most fertile and best farmed counties in England and Scotland, the results will all bear witness in our favor. In Ontario the progress of the farmer is impeded, first, by forests which have to be cut down, and then by stumps which have to be eradicated by a slow and expensive process. In many places the soil is of indifferent quality, and the roads leading to market are often of the worst possible description.

In Quebec, especially along the north shore of the St. Lawrence, and east shore of the Ottawa, the general character and aspect of the country is rocky and sterile. In many places the soil is quite unsuitable for agriculture, being poor and thin, and the farmers in that Province, have, in addition to these disadvantages, all those which are encountered by the farmers of Ontario.

In certain counties in England and Scotland farming may be said to have reached the highest development it has ever attained, and there is no other department of industry pursued in Great Britain to which the people of that country can point with so much well-founded pride, as to their agriculture. The high degree of excellence, however, to which English and Scotch farmers have attained is not to be attributed to the native fertility of

the soil, for it is a matter of notoriety that many soils in that country, now characterized by the highest degree of fertility, were, at the beginning of the present century, bleak and sterile moors. A variety of circumstances have combined to make British farming what it is, and British farmers what they are. Of these causes, the chief is undoubtedly the great development of agricultural chemistry, and the free and intelligent application of its principles. Now, in Manitoba we have a country which presents none of the impediments and drawbacks which harass the farmers in the other Provinces of the Dominion. Our soil is rich and deep—devoid alike of stones and stumps—a soil which, if broken in one season, is ready to receive a crop in the next—a soil which, when fairly under cultivation, will show results such as British farmers can scarcely show, after devoting half a century to the scientific practice of agriculture, and that too, with every appliance which science and art could suggest, or money procure.

The fertile soil and level surface of this country offer unrivalled facilities for the pursuit of agriculture on a large scale. Nowhere on this continent can steam plows, sowing machines, reapers and thrashers, be employed with so much profit and ease; and the inducements to engage in this pursuit on such a scale are surely sufficient to induce all who possess the necessary means and skill, to do so. One of these inducements is the certainty that, for the next few years, we shall have a local demand for all the farm produce which can be raised. This demand is now far in excess of the supply, and it will keep pace with the greatly increased immigration which is certain to take place from this time forward. Moreover, the wants of the thousands of workmen, soon to be employed in the construction of the Railway, will enormously augment the demand for home produce.

Another inducement, and it is the main one, is that, in a year or two, we shall have an outlet through our own territory, and by means of communication of our own, to the leading grain markets of the world—an outlet which, for cheapness and speed, will probably be unequalled. Our distance from the nearest point of the great water

highway to Europe is but four hundred miles, and the constructors of the Pacific Railway have undertaken to complete that portion of the road by 1876.

With all these facts in view: the necessity of developing our agricultural resources, in order to turn the balance of trade in our favor, and to prevent the Province from becoming perpetually poverty-stricken; the unrivalled facilities we possess for embarking in this great branch of human occupation, on a large and profitable scale; the certainty of an immediate local demand, at remunerative prices; and the further certainty that, before the Province can have much produce to export, we shall have cheap and speedy communication with the leading grain markets of the world, ought surely to stimulate all who possess the requisite facilities to engage, without delay, in developing our main resource to the fullest possible extent.

Those who are most conversant with the characteristics of the climate and soil of this Province predict that it, and other portions of the fertile belt, will, in a few years, become the garden and granary of the Dominion; and, without considering themselves too sanguine, they indulge in the pleasing prospect of yet beholding our rather bleak-looking plains divided, by hedges and fences, into regular fields, interspersed with groves of trees and dotted over with homesteads—the comfortable and substantial dwellings of a prosperous and numerous population. We can say a fervent Amen to both the prediction and the prospect, and we trust that all who have the true interests of the Province at heart will, without delay, do what they can to insure the commencement of so desirable a consummation.